

# OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM

Photos by Master Sgt. Dave Ahlschwede

**RIGHT**—Jeko Jekov and Staff Sgt. Olga Valery patrol the beach area at Camp Sarafovo, Bulgaria. American Security Forces members work in conjunction with Bulgarian Military Police to maintain security on Camp Sarafovo which houses personnel supporting refueling operations. KC-10 Extenders from the 305th/514th Air Mobility Wing, McGuire AFB, N.J., are deployed to Burgas Airport and nearby Camp Sarafovo, Bulgaria, to support tanker operations. Members from various Air Force units worldwide are currently deployed with the 409th Air Expeditionary Group in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

**BELOW**—Tech. Sgt. John Owen briefs Bojan Savor on the M-249 machine gun. Owen and other security forces members work in conjunction with Bulgarian military police to maintain security on Camp Sarafovo, which houses personnel supporting refueling operations.



## TEAM KIRTLAND Guard, active duty work together again in Bulgaria

**BY STAFF SGT. JASON SMITH**

409th Air Expeditionary Group Public Affairs

**BURGAS, Bulgaria**—TEAM KIRTLAND active-duty and Air National Guard members are working together again, this time as members of the 409th Air Expeditionary Group at Camp Sarafovo, Bulgaria.

Security forces members from the New Mexico Air National Guard's 150th Fighter Wing and support personnel from the 377th Mission Support Group arrived at the camp over a month ago where they support air refueling operations with KC-10A Extender aircraft. The KC-10s are continually involved in the air refueling of aircraft that are striking targets in Iraq as part of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Under the command of Maj. Richard Almeter, members of the 150th Security Forces Squadron are not only working hand-in-hand with active-duty personnel, but also with Bulgarian National Police.

"It's been a positive experience," said Master Sgt. Roy Johnson, 409th Security Forces Squadron deployed from the 150th Fighter Wing. "We're learning each other's law enforcement and security techniques. Soon, we're going to start joint patrols with the Bulgarians."

The job the security forces members have to do is not an easy one. Twenty-four hours a day/seven days a week, the cops are charged with providing security and law enforcement functions for more than 400 personnel at the camp, in addition to the aircraft and resources at the flightline about two kilometers away.

Security forces have taken on many extra duties including conducting honor guard functions, helping with school tours of the flightline and camp, working with local media to build a positive relationship, providing extra security for multiple distinguished visitors and developing emergency response checklists for themselves and the Bulgarian Police.

"After a long history of Soviet influence in Bulgaria, learning each others' systems is very different for both of us," said Almeter. "The Bulgarian military and police have welcomed the American security forces, and both sides are working hard to build rapport."

The efforts of both sides are already paying off, according to Johnson.

"A lot of our guys are learning some Bulgarian,

and in turn, they're teaching (the Bulgarians) some English," said Johnson. "It gives everybody a chance to practice, and also an opportunity to socialize during downtime."

"A lot of our guys are civilian cops at home," said Johnson, who is also an Albuquerque policeman. "A lot of the questions the Bulgarian Police ask are about police work at home. Cops are the same everywhere in the world, and that common bond has been huge here."

The 150th Security Forces Squadron has been activated since September 2001, according to Johnson. While they are excited about getting home and spending time with their families, the Airman keep their morale high and stay focused on the job they have to do.

"There are certain times when the people get tired and worn down that they feel the stress of wanting to get home," said Johnson. "But they all feel a great deal of pride in being involved in the war efforts of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom. We all know we have jobs to do, and we're proud to serve our country in whatever we're called to do."



**RIGHT**—Members of the 86th Combat Support Hospital from Fort Campbell, Ky., and a U.S. Air Force C-130 medical evacuation flight crew load injured U.S. soldiers onto a C-130 aircraft for medical evacuation April 4.

Photo by Staff Sgt. Quinton T. Burris

**BELOW—INCIRLIK AIR BASE, Turkey** — F-16CJ Fighting Falcons from the 55th Fighter Squadron taxi here for the last time April 7. The fighters are returning home to Shaw AFB, S.C., after supporting Operation Northern Watch for several years.

Photo by Airman 1st Class Joseph Thompson

**BOTTOM**—Crew chiefs with the 392nd Air Expeditionary Wing conduct pre-flight checks on an A-10 Thunderbolt II at a forward-deployed location supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom. A-10s have been operating at an air base in southern Iraq for about a week, giving them more time over the battlefield because they expend less fuel getting to and from the front.

Photo by Staff Sgt. Shane A. Cuomo



**ABOVE RIGHT**—Pararescuemen from the 301st Rescue Squadron talk with a member of the 101st Airborne Division April 6 at a forward-deployed location in Iraq. Air Force pararescuemen are the only DOD specialty specifically trained and equipped to conduct conventional or unconventional rescue operations. A PJ's primary function is as a personnel recovery specialist, with emergency medical capabilities in humanitarian and combat environments.

Photo by Staff Sgt. Shane A. Cuomo

**RIGHT**—U.S. Army soldiers board an Air Force C-130 Hercules at a forward-deployed location in the Arabian Gulf region. Coalition air forces have transported more than 51,000 passengers and moved about 38,000 short tons of cargo from March 19 to April 4.

Photo by Staff Sgt. Quinton T. Burris